CENTURY OF PEACE BETWEEN AMERICA AND GREAT BRITAIN COMPLETED CHRISTMAS EVE

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"THE essential prerequisite of salvation," said Sophomoricus Theologicus, "is sin." So we may say that the prerequisite of peace making is war; wherefore consideration of our century of peace with Great Britain must begin with some thought of the war which preceded it. To that conflict we may apply the comment of the German Crown Prince upon the present European struggle. "Such a stupid war!" It was stupid, indeed, on our part. True, it was marked with two or three heroic performances on land—and twice as many unspeakably disgraceful exhibitions of incapacity, poltroonery or worse—and on the water with some of the most thrilling and brilliant exploits in the naval annals of the world. But it was begun without due cause, under false pretences and without any statement of reasons; it utterly failed of its purpose; and in the peace making at its end neither its real nor its professed objects were so much as mentioned, but were all left as before, precisely as though there had been no Lundy's Lane and no Lake Erie and "Old Ironsides."

We were, as we had been for a score of years, the victim of European embroilments, between the upper and nether millstones of Great Britain and France, at this time grinding exceeding small in the last desperate turnings. We were at least ostensibly striving to maintain neutrality, though our efforts were impaired by the savage and insensate prevalence of such factionalism as had not before and happily has not since marred our domestic history.

THE SOMEWHAT VIOLENT AMERICAN NEUTRALITY OF 1814.

Jefferson's old hatred of England and love for France had vanished in the Louisiana episode, and he regarded the two impartially, with "a perfect horror at anything like connecting ourselves with the politics of Europe," and with a policy of "peace, commerce and honest friendship with all, entangling alliances with none." That policy he transmitted to his understudy and successor, Madison, who faithfully maintained it, with occasional touches of the variability and inconsistency which had marked the Sage of Monticello. "To cherish peace and friendly intercourse with all nations having corresponding dispositions" was the keynote of his inaugural address, and a more sincere man than he never filled the Presidential chair.

England and France were, however, engaged in a life or death struggle, in which they were both unwilling to handicap or to embarrass themselves by too scrupulously regarding the rights of other nations, especially of nations which were supposed not to be strong enough effectively to resent such disregard. "Inter arma," Cicero had said, "leges silent," even international laws. Moreover, neither of those powers had adopted the advanced and enlightened principles of the United States concerning neutral rights, but both clung to the mediæval doctrines which ignored neutrality and held that whoever was not for them was against them. Still more, there is no doubt that many British subjects and deserters did enter the service of our navy and mercantile marine; and we must remember that neither England nor any other nation but our own at that time conceded the right of voluntary expatriation.

BRITISH AND FRENCH INTERFERENCE WITH AMERICAN COMMERCE.

There consequently prevailed for many years systematic and increasingly intolerable British and French interference with our shipping. Our coasts were infested and our harbors were watched by privateers, some of which committed acts of sheer piracy. "They have captured in the very entrance of our harbors," said Jefferson, "not only the vessels of our friends coming to trade with us, but our own also." Yet he persistently opposed the building of a navy, beyond a few small gunboats, which could be put upon wheeled trucks and carted inland to get out of harm's way. So British search of our vessels went on, with not only the seizure of British deserters, but also the impressment of innumerable native American seamen, whom England wanted to man her own ships in her war with France. There were Orders in Council, too, and Berlin and Milan Decrees, in which the two great rivals seemed to vie with each other in oppressing and destroying American commerce.

The policies of both countries were severe, as war measures usually are. But that of France was by far the worse. The British policy forbade us to trade with France, but it gave us fair warning; it permitted traders to go elsewhither with their cargoes, and it paid for whatever was seized.

ARBITRARY CONFISCATION WAS THE FRENCH POLICY.

The French policy was that of arbitrary confiscation. An American merchant ship, for example, which was caught by a British privateer, taken into a British port against its will and then released was for that reason seized and wholly confiscated by the French. Some were seized and confiscated simply because they had been spoken at sea by British ships, and that before the French decree of non-intercourse had been issued. However, as the British sea power was immeasurably greater than the French, America suffered far more from the milder policy of England than from the harsher policy of France, and consequently American wrath at England became far greater than at France.

This was the dilemma: Our ships must comply with certain conditions or they would be seized by British cruisers, but if they did comply with them, they would be seized by the French. In the immortal words of Lorenzo Dow:

"You'll be damned if you do; you'll be damned if you don't." At the urging of Jefferson, we tried non-intercourse and embargo, forbidding our ships to leave our ports, but soon got tired of such commercial suicide. Then diplomacy was resorted to, under serious disadvantages.

We began it with a singularly unfit man, Robert Smith, as Secretary of State, while Great Britain was represented at Washington first by the well meaning but indiscreet Erskine and then by the quite impossible Jackson, who was frankly described by Canning as the possessor of all those British characteristics which were sometimes offensive to other nations. If to this it be added that Madison, with his own transparent integrity and sincerity, was completely tricked by the duplicity of the French government, it may easily be understood how and why diplomacy failed to compose our differences with Great Britain.

But there was another factor, which in the end proved to be the most potent of all. That was the lust of land, the same that a generation later led us into our unholy aggression upon Mexico, and that still later inspired the Ostend Manifesto and caused our government to countenance the land pirate, Walker, in his attempt to loot Nicaragua. Nominally, we went to war for "freedom of trade and sailors' rights." Actually, we went to war for the conquest of Canada. Nor was this purpose concealed. "The conquest of Canada," cried Henry Clay, "is in your power. The militia of Kentucky alone are competent to place Montreal and Upper Canada at your feet!" By such appeals was Congress persuaded to declare the war. To them Jefferson, speaking from the retirement of Monticello, responded: "The acquisition of Canada this year as far as the neighborhood of Quebec will be a mere matter of marching, and will give us experience for the attack on Halifax the next, and the final expulsion of England from the American continent." No wonder that Randolph of Roanoke, with bitter truth, declared: "Agrarian cupidity, not maritime right, urges the war."

NO LIES FROM US AND NO CONFESSION, EITHER.

We had, however, at least the grace not to lie about it. There was in the act of Congress no pretence that we were going to war for "freedom of trade and sailors' rights"—which, in fact, most sorely needed vindicating—but neither, of course, was there a confession of our lust for Canadian land. So no cause whatever was mentioned. The act contained the single sentence, "that war be and the same is hereby declared to exist." With what followed it would not be pleasant to concern ourselves. Dreams of the conquest and annexation of Canada vanished in the smoke of our own burning Capitol, at Washington. We may exult in memory of the deeds of our navy on the lakes and on the high seas, of the midnight strife at Lundy's Lane and of the triumph of frontier levies over peninsular veterans at New Orleans. But the rest is silence.

A most important corollary to the war, or rather to the complications which preceded it, was the establishment of relations between America and Russia. The latter power had been conspicuously unsympathetic, if not potentially hostile toward us during the Revolution, and had never yet formally recognized our independence. But Madison wisely sent thither as minister that master diplomat, John Quincy Adams, who arrived at a psychological moment.

THE WORK OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AT ST. PETERSBURG.

He was received with special honors, and as prompt results of his mission. American commerce was welcomed to Russian ports and was in a measure protected from harassment in the Baltic, and Russia decided to break with Napoleon and to seek leadership of the alliance against him. In fact, just four days after our declaration of war against Great Britain war was also declared by France against Russia. That made Russia and Great Britain allies, and caused the Czar to regard with much regret the conflict between his ally, Great Britain, and his friend, America.

At one time, indeed, the Czar feared that America might become allied with France, not only against Great Britain but also against Russia. For that fear there was no ground, but because of it Alexander was moved to increase his friendly overtures to America and also to make offers of mediation between this country and his British ally. Such offers were made, unofficially, in January, 1813, and officially in the following month, and in March the government of the United States formally accepted them. It did this on the premature assumption that Great Britain had signified her acceptance, an assumption for which the Russian government was wholly responsible. The Czar's Minister of State, Romanzoff, had told Adams that the offer of mediation had been made to Great Britain at the same time and in the same form as to the United States, when, as a matter of fact, it had not been made at all. The result was, when our three envoys, Adams, Gallatin and Bayard, met at St. Petersburg, in expectation of meeting British envoys there to negotiate under Russian mediation, they found that Great Britain had declined to have anything to do with the scheme.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS ARE TRANSFERRED TO LONDON.

Happily, however, the British government made known to ours its willingness to enter into direct negotiations, considering a controversy between these two countries to be a family matter of Anglo-Saxondom, into which no outsider should be called. The offer was at once accepted, and Adams, Gallatin and Bayard, reinforced by Henry Clay and Jonathan Russell, were directed to proceed to London, there to conduct the peace negotiations. Gallatin and Bayard were the first to arrive, and they got there at an inopportune moment. It was in April, 1914. Napoleon had abdicated the throne of France. Great Britain was triumphant and exultant, with army and navy free to be transferred to America for the prosecution of the war. It was purposed to reconquer and annex New England, where a willingness to rejoin the British Empire was believed to prevail, to challenge our title to Louisiana, to drive us out of West Florida, to erect Michigan, Wisconsin and the northern parts of Indiana and Illinois into an Indian territory under British suzerainty, and to exclude us from the North Atlantic fisheries.

Gallatin, in dismay, begged our minister at Paris to seek the aid of the Czar, who was then in that capital, but neither Alexander nor his minister, Nesselrode, who had succeeded Romanzoff, would so much as grant him an interview. Then Lafayette took up the case and pleaded with the Czar, at Mme. de Stael's house, with the result that the Czar promised that when he went over to London he would do what he could for the Americans. But when Alexander got to London he told Gallatin that he could do nothing for him, and soon thereafter he began to plan the distinctly anti-American policies of the Holy Alliance.

CONTRAST BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN COMMISSIONERS.

Thus deserted by their one supposed friend, the American commissioners resolved to rely upon their own resources. They arranged to have the negotiations conducted on neutral soil, at Ghent, and repaired thither in August, 1814, to meet their British antagonists. Between the two commissions there was a striking difference. The five Americans were among the ablest and most resolute men that this country then possessed. Adams, the chairman, was an expert diplomat and international lawyer, without a superior in the world in intellectual keenness and controversial skill. Gallatin was a man of commanding ability and of a fine diplomatic temperament, well fitted to counteract the somewhat harsh and arrogant manner of Adams. Clay was a fine representative of the younger element of the West; Russell was an equally good representative of New England and the East generally, and Bayard united in himself the principles of both the great political parties of America. Opposed to these were only three British envoys. Lord Gambier was a naval officer of discreditable repute; Henry Goulbourn was a tyro in diplomacy, and William Adams was an academic jurist. The three had apparently been selected because they were mediocrities and could therefore be trusted to take no initiative, but mechanically to reflect the mind of the British Ministry.

THE DEADLOCK AT GHENT, AND APPARENT FAILURE.

The conferences began with a deadlock. The British demanded the surrender of the Northwest Territories as an Indian domain. The Americans refused so much as to consider the demand. The negotiations therefore ceased, and the Americans began to pack their trunks for a return home. Meanwhile the war continued. Chippewa and Lundy's Lane were fought while the commissioners were proceeding to Ghent, and the raid upon Washington, the repulse at Baltimore and the Battle of Lake Champlain followed hard upon their first meetings. But before the Americans could leave Ghent Lord Castlereagh himself called there, on his way to that Congress of Vienna which was to reorganize Europe. He asked the Americans to wait until he could make new proposals. They did so, and he submitted his views in writing, out-Heroding the Herod of his commissioners. America was to relinquish the Northwest Territories and all of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron and the northern and eastern parts of Maine, and was to have no naval vessels on Lake Erie or Lake Ontario, and Great Britain was to have full rights of navigation on the Mississippi River. Adams and his colleagues wrote a notably resolute and forceful reply to the effect that they would not so much as consider or refer to their home government any such proposals. They then reported to Washington the failure of the peace negotiations. Adams prepared to return to St. Petersburg, Clay to go to Paris, and Russell to Sweden, to which country he was minister, while Gallatin and Bayard turned their faces toward America. This news reached the United States when the people were still exulting over Lundy's Lane and Lake Champlain, when they were exasperated over the burning of Washington, and when they were learning to sing "The Star Spangled Banner," and they grimly resolved to fight the war out to the bitter end.

CONFERENCES ARE RESUMED UPON LORD CASTLEREAGH'S REQUEST.

Then Castlereagh saw a great light. Disregarding the fact that he had himself done worse than they, he gave his commissioners a wigging for their extreme demands, and asked for a renewal of negotiations on the basis of a complete relinquishment of those demands. With that triumph the Americans resumed the conferences, making the counter demand that the old territorial boundaries as they existed before the war should be restored at all points. To this the British demurred, and threatened to break off negotiations again. It was actually suggested by some hot heads in London that the Duke of Wellington should be sent to America, either to command the British army or to negotiate peace here. But the Duke replied that if he came hither he could do nothing in a military way without the control of the Great Lakes, and he saw no way in which that could be secured, while as for terms of peace, he regarded the Americans as quite right in their demand for the restoration of the ante-bellum boundaries. Meantime, affairs at Vienna were not going to Castlereagh's liking, talk of Russian intervention was renewed, and British taxpayers grumbled at the prospect of more American war bills. So the British yielded and invited the American commissioners to draft a treaty of peace.

HAVING REDUCED THE ENEMY, THE PEACE MAKERS DISAGREE.

In this the Americans had a pretty free hand. Their original instructions were to make complete abandonment of the impressment of seamen a sine qua non, but later Monroe told them that that, while desirable, was not indispensable. Then grave differences arose among themselves. Adams and Russell, New Englanders, wanted to insist upon North Atlantic fishery rights, and cared little about the Mississippi River, while Clay and Bayard wanted the British excluded from the Mississippi and

PEACE—"I'M GLAD YOU BOYS ARE FRIENDS."

were indifferent toward the fisheries. Then the question arose whether the British-American treaty of 1783 was still valid or had been automatically voided by the war. Clay thought it had been voided and that thus the British title to navigation of the Mississippi had lapsed. Adams took the contrary view, that that treaty was of so exceptional a character that it had survived the incidence of war and was still in force, and that therefore the American rights in the fisheries and the British rights in the Mississippi were intact. In this Adams was doubtless right, but Clay could not be convinced, and there was actually danger of the failure of the negotiations through the inability of the Americans to agree among themselves.

THE DRAFT OF A TREATY SUBMITTED ON NOVEMBER 10.

Gallatin, however, with his unfailing patience and good humor, saved the day by persuading both Adams and Clay to assent to the making of a treaty in which neither the fisheries nor the Mississippi should be mentioned. The draft of such a treaty was submitted to the British commissioners on November 10, at about the time General Jackson was seizing Pensacola in return for the British use of that Spanish city as their base of operations against Southern Georgia. The reply of the British commissioners, a fortnight later, was to throw a firebrand among the Americans. This was an amended draft, which contained a specific recognition of the British right to navigate the Mississippi, but which contained no allusion to the fisheries. That set Adams and Clay at each other again, hammer and tongs, and again Gallatin's diplomacy was taxed to restore peace among his own colleagues. A proposal to grant the Mississippi rights in return for the fishery rights was rejected by the British. Then the Americans offered to proceed with negotiations under a tacit reservation of all rights, to be determined by future processes.

THE SIGNING OF A TREATY IN WHICH NOTHING IS CONCLUDED.

In the end, substantially, this course was adopted. The amazing anomaly was presented on Christmas Eve, December 24, of the making and signing of a treaty of peace which did not settle nor so much as refer in any way to even a single one of the issues over which the war had been declared and fought. Search of vessels, impressment, blockade, maritime rights of neutrals, indemnities and the other matters which had loomed so large at the beginning of the war and for years before were as completely ignored as though they never had existed. The treaty realized the title of the last chapter of "Rasselas": "The Conclusion, in Which Nothing Is Concluded." It simply provided for peace, for the restoration of all conquests to the ante bellum status, for the appointment of commissioners to define disputed boundaries, for the ending of Indian wars and for the abolition of the slave trade—the last named provision unfortunately not becoming effective for many years thereafter, chiefly because its enforcement would have involved the exercise of that right of search which both parties were now desirous of dropping into "innocuous desuetude," or at least of exercising as little as possible.

THE DIVISION OF GLORY AMONG THE COMMISSIONERS.

The chief credit for the making of this treaty must be given to Gallatin, though all his colleagues must share in it. Even the sometimes acrimonious differences between Adams and Clay on the whole contributed to rather than obstructed the attainment of the end. Gallatin described the treaty to Monroe as being "as favorable as could be expected under existing circumstances, so far as they were known to us," and that estimate of it was probably just. Before the news of the signing of it could reach America the battle of New Orleans was fought and the British suffered their one really stinging land defeat of the whole war. The news did not, in fact, become known here until near the middle of February, 1815, when it was received with mingled emotions of satisfaction and regret. There was occasion for the administration party to feel humiliated, because of the failure of the high and resounding boasts with which they had begun the war, yet Madison reported to Congress that the treaty ended "with peculiar felicity a campaign signalized by the most brilliant successes." The treaty was submitted to the Senate on February 15, and was ratified two days later. Instantly there was a gratifying response in business and finance. Stocks in New York and Philadelphia rose from ten to eighteen points within a week, and the whole country hastened into a general revival of industrial and commercial prosperity.

The issues left unsettled by the treaty were, however, numerous and formidable, and some of them were urgent. Adams, Gallatin and Clay soon began supplementary negotiations, which resulted in the making of a commercial convention on July 3, 1815, under which, unfortunately, only a few matters were disposed of. The fisheries question was not so much as touched, and, indeed, it was not until in the next century that it was finally settled. It was not for many years, either, that the questions of search and impressment were formally settled, although after the Treaty of Ghent they were seldom raised in an acute form.

PEACE THAT HAS OUTLIVED TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

With all its anomalies and omissions and all its legacies of controversy to future years, the peace of Christmas Eve a hundred years ago was a real peace, based upon mutual agreement and sincere desire, of sufficiently robust fibre to endure the strain of all the differences and disputes of the succeeding century, which have indeed served merely to strengthen it and to render its perpetuity more assured.

Since the War of 1812 had at least ostensibly arisen through the aggressions of European powers upon American rights and interests, it was an interesting coincidence that the first great confirmation of the peace should come because of other European processes. At the very time of the making of the peace the so-called Holy Alliance was in course of formation, and the direct and most important outcome thereof was the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine. To that epochal achievement Great Britain contributed much, in the way of suggestion and encouragement, and the sympathetic attitude of that country greatly enhanced the moral, political and military force of the pronouncement. The net result of the episode was to unite the two countries more closely, though from the very first Great Britain challenged that part of the doctrine which was interpreted as forbidding further European colonization in America and which was then much misunderstood, while in later years, in respect to Central America and Venezuela, the whole doctrine was more or less defied.

DIFFICULTIES SETTLED IN EARLY PART OF NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Before the time of the doctrine we had come unpleasantly near to a clash over the killing of Ambrister and Arbuthnot, in Florida, by General Jackson, and in 1818 had begun a rivalry for the possession of the Oregon country, which lasted until 1846, and which more than once caused talk of war. Indeed, the final settlement was not until the San Juan arbitral award was made in 1872. The Maine boundary was another vexatious problem, submitted to an arbitration of which we refused to accept the result, involving an attempt at the waging of war by Maine, and a final settlement under the Webster-Ashburton treaty in 1842. At one time there was a little cloud in Texas, when, before we finally annexed that state, there was some coquetting between it and England.

Central America was a portentous storm centre, with British aggressions in Belize and on the Mosquito Coast and in the Bay Islands and at Tigre Island. The Clayton-Bulwer treaty in 1850 was intended to compose all differences there, but, in fact, proved itself a fecund source of new troubles, which intermittently vexed both countries until the ill-conceived instrument was replaced by the Hay-Pauncefote treaty. In Cuba we declined, in 1852, to make a tripartite agreement with Great Britain and France for the guardianship of that island, and thereafter our paramount interest there was recognized. During the Ten Years' War a British captain, Sir Lambton Lorraine, in an historic episode intervened to save Americans from slaughter. During the Spanish war of 1898 Great Britain was our one important friend in Europe, notably when Admiral Chichester gallantly stood with Dewey at Manila against the obstreperous Diederichs.

On one occasion we had to read the riot act for the undoing of the work of an overzealous British captain in Hawaii, and in Samoa the ill-devised tripartite control caused much friction until it was abolished, in 1898. In China, in 1859, occurred the famous "blood is thicker than water" episode, a fitting prelude at long range to the co-operation of the two countries in later years in establishing the principle of the "open door." There was some unpleasantness during the Crimean War, when attempts were made to recruit men for the British army in the United States, but when, in 1858, the first Atlantic cable was laid, and then, in 1860, the Prince of Wales visited this country, all seemed quite serene.

But our Civil War made more trouble, until on a memorable occasion our minister to Great Britain was compelled to say to the British Foreign Minister, "This means war!" The first overt act was the wholly unjustifiable seizure of two Confederate passengers on the British steamer Trent by an overzealous American naval officer, in utter violation of our own traditional principles. Then came the British compliance with Confederate military schemes, in which the Alabama and other vessels were permitted to issue from British ports to prey upon American commerce, and in which the similar issuing of ironclad rams was narrowly avoided. Meantime we were here tolerating Fenian activities, culminating in an armed raid into Canada. The outcome of it all was, however, the treaty of Washington, in 1871, and the Geneva arbitration, in 1872, which immeasurably advanced the cause of peace and arbitration the world over.

TROUBLES IN ALASKA—THE SEALS AND THE KLONDIKE.

Two troubles arose in Alaska. One was over fur seals, and our untenable pretence of ownership of those animals wherever they might be found in the waters of the high seas, against which an arbitral award was given at Paris in 1893. The other was over the boundary line, when the discovery of gold in the Klondike made Canada want to break through our Panhandle and get direct access to the sea, a matter which was decided altogether in our favor. As for the fisheries on the Newfoundland and Canadian coasts, it was the oldest of all these controversies and it was the most enduring. Commission after commission sat upon it, with awards now to one party and now to the other, and modus vivendi after modus vivendi was established, until the twentieth century was well started, when a final adjustment was made.

Venezuela was another name of grave portent. In 1895 Great Britain issued an ultimatum to that disorderly state, which threatened to infringe upon the Monroe Doctrine, whereupon President Cleveland issued a counterblast which fell just short of being a provocation to war. Probably never in the whole century were the two nations nearer to war than at that time. But the sober second thought of both nations prevailed over the irascible passions of their statesmen. A vigorous controversy ensued, in the course of which Mr. Cleveland, or his Secretary of State, Mr. Olney, made the most extreme interpretation and application of the Monroe Doctrine on record, and Lord Salisbury made the most sweeping denial of that doctrine ever made by a responsible British minister. But in the end arbitration prevailed, with results satisfactory to America.

SOME UNPLEASANT EPISODES AND OTHERS MOSTLY PLEASANT.

There were other unpleasant episodes. In 1876 our Minister to England came home hurriedly and in unpleasant circumstances, and in 1888 the British Minister to this country went home discredited for meddling in politics. But there were more agreeable passages of relationship. At the memorable jubilee of Queen Victoria, at her funeral, and at the coronation and again at the funeral of Edward VII, the conspicuous place of the American official representatives marked the peculiar intimacy of the two nations. Indeed, during the closing years of Victoria's reign and during the whole of Edward's too brief reign, partly because of the personality of those sovereigns and of the American ambassadors at that court and partly because of the disposition of the two peoples, Great Britain and America were drawn together somewhat more closely than any other two nations in all the world.

The same happy circumstances have been continued in the reign of George V, and they prevail to-day, so that the completion of the full cycle of a hundred years of peace finds that peace more confidently established than at any other moment in all the century. With the practical collapse of the malign attempt to repudiate the Hay-Pauncefote treaty not a single cause of important controversy is left in existence between the two countries, and the coming Christmas Eve will give promise of another century of peace to come only a little less certainly than it will bear witness of a century of peace achieved.